POLICY PAPER
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Leveraging on Climate Action to Advance Climate Security Response in Africa

1.0 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

1.1 State of Climate Insecurity in the Region

Recent studies agree that climate-related disasters (including heat waves, droughts, storms and floods) modestly increase armed conflict risks, in the presence of contextual factors like agricultural dependence, insufficient infrastructure, or the political exclusion of ethnic groups. This can occur by (a) worsening livelihood conditions and, for example, pushing people to join extremist groups e.g., Al-Shabaab in Somalia; (b) increasing migration, thus triggering in-migration tensions with the host communities, as happened in Darfur; or (c) pushing pastoralists to move beyond their traditional routes, bringing them into conflict with other pastoralists or farmers (Abshir, 2020). As such, it is no surprise that climate-related security risks are now prominently discussed at different multilateral organizations including UN agencies and RECs such as IGAD. Most prominent among these is the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) which concludes that, while there is little evidence of a direct causal relationship, there is evidence that climate change or climate variability can increase the risk of armed conflict in certain circumstances (multiplier effect), if not addressed.

1.2 What is driving the observed climate insecurity patterns?

According to State of the Climate in Africa 2021 report[1] Africa warmed at an average rate of 0.3°C per decade between 1991 and 2021, faster than the warming from 1961-1990 at 0.2°C per decade. The year 2021 was also the third warmest years on record for Africa. Sea level rise is increasing along the African coastlines at a higher rate than the global mean rate, especially along the Red Sea and southwest Indian Ocean where the rate is close to 4 mm/year. By 2030, 108-116 million people in Africa are expected to be exposed to sea level rise risk. Drought in East Africa has worsened following four consecutive failed rainy seasons combined with heightened conflict, related population displacement, and COVID-19 restrictions. The situation is worsening in 2022 – especially in Ethiopia, Somalia and parts of Kenya and Southern Madagascar.

Parts of Africa have similarly endured extreme weather events, including severe floods in South Sudan, Nigeria, Republic of Congo, DRC and Burundi. South Sudan recorded the third straight year of extreme floods leading to elevated water levels of Lakes and rivers, resulting from the intense rainfall in 2020 and 2021. The opposite was the case in Northern Africa which has experienced extreme heat, especially in Tunisia, Algeria, Morocco, and Libya—accompanied by wildfires and sand/dust storms were a recurring problem. Climate-related hazards continued to be a major driver of new displacement in Africa (WMO, 2021). Chronic floods and droughts, sea level rise, and extreme weather events all influence displacement patterns within borders and across international borders.

1 https://public.wmo.int/en/our-mandate/climate/wmo-statement-state-of-global-climate/Africa

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Around 16.5 million internal displacements were recorded in sub-Saharan Africa in 2022, an increase of 17 per cent compared with the previous year. This is explained by a near three-fold increase in the number of disaster displacements to 7.4 million, the highest figure ever reported for the region. There is also growing concern about drought fueling competition and violence over land, water and other ever scarce natural resources. Localised conflicts, sometimes directly linked to cattle ownership, have further disrupted seasonal migration trends, triggering more displacement.[2]

1.3 The implications

As a consequence of the above phenomena, three concerns emerge. First, losses and damages **are already widespread** and will increase significantly on current trajectories, making it imperative to advance a coordinated regional and global policy response[3]. Secondly, climate-related security risks are already making conflict prevention and resolution in the Africa region more challenging, notwithstanding their complex and interconnected nature. Thirdly, the risks and hazards are projected to worsen the existing vulnerabilities in human security, leading to violent conflicts in the hotspots (particularly the Sahel, Central and Eastern Africa). As a result, more involuntary migration and displacement in Africa is likely going forward[4]. This kind of scenario calls upon African policymakers to pay more attention to the longer-term and less visible climate change effects on conflict drivers in the region, because competing urgent development needs tend to absorb all resources and attention in fragile contexts[5].

This policy paper provides strategic recommendations for improving climate security responses at various levels. It presents an analysis of existing efforts and proposes targeted actions for national governments, regional bodies, international organizations, civil society, and local communities.

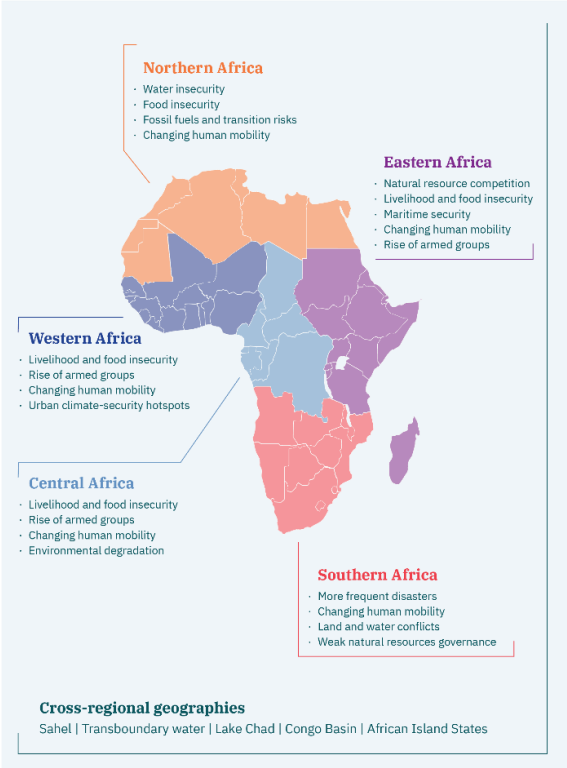
2 IDMC_GRID_2023_Global_Report_on_Internal_Displacement_LR.pdf (internal-displacement.org)

3 Future Earth, The Earth League, WCRP (2022). 10 New Insights in Climate Science 2022. Stockholm https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7228926.

4 Future Earth, The Earth League, WCRP (2022). 10 New Insights in Climate Science 2022. Stockholm https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7228926.

5 Abshir S (2020) Climate Change and Security in the Horn of Africa: Can Europe help to reduce the risks? Adelphi, Climate Fragility Policy Paper.

2.0 CLIMATE SECURITY RISKS IN AFRICA



[6]While there are important commonalities in terms of the climate-related security risks that African countries and societies are facing, the pathways or specific ways they play out and their dynamics are always highly localised and context specific. Histories of conflict, marginalization, identity, the behaviour of political, traditional, and business leaders, the underlying political economy and power structures, and governance structures and institutions are all decisive in translating climate risks into security and conflict risks. These factors are highly contextual, and change from region to region, country to country and community to community.

2.1 Direct and Indirect Climate Impacts on Security

Climate change has both direct and indirect impacts on security in Africa. Direct impacts include extreme weather events, such as droughts and floods, which disrupt agricultural production and water availability, leading to food insecurity and displacement. Indirect impacts arise when climate-induced resource shortages heighten tensions between

6 Key Climate Security Pathways: Africa Climate Security Risk Assessment | Weathering Risk

communities, escalate conflicts, and strain governance systems.

2.2 Vulnerable Regions and Communities

Regions such as the Sahel, the Horn of Africa, and the Lake Chad Basin are particularly vulnerable due to their climate-sensitive livelihoods and historical instability. Vulnerable communities, including pastoralists, smallholder farmers, and women, are disproportionately affected, facing higher risks of displacement, economic loss, and violence.

2.3 The Role of Governance in Addressing Climate Security

Effective governance is critical for managing climate security risks. Weak institutional capacity, limited climate finance access, and inadequate policy frameworks hinder the implementation of climate adaptation and resilience measures. Strengthening governance systems is essential for creating sustainable and conflict-sensitive responses to climate change.

3.0 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS FOR ENHANCING CLIMATE SECURITY RESPONSE IN AFRICA

Addressing the links between climate change, peace and security is a key building block for development more broadly and a stable, peaceful, and prosperous continent. In order to break the vicious cycle of increasing climate change, environmental degradation, insecurity and instability, ambitious action is needed.

- Ambitious mitigation action to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and keep warming at a minimum following the principle of common but differentiated responsibility.
- Efforts to adapt to climate change and directly address climate related security risks must be massively upscaled.

This section outlines recommendations categorized by various stakeholders—national governments, regional bodies, international organizations, and civil society.

3.1. Recommendations for National Governments

- **Integrate Climate Security into National Development Plans**; National governments should develop comprehensive strategies that incorporate climate security considerations into economic development, disaster management, and social protection policies. This integration will facilitate coordinated responses to climate-related challenges.
- **Strengthen Early Warning Systems and Response Mechanisms**; Establish robust early warning systems to monitor and respond to climate-induced security threats. Enhance the capacities of meteorological institutions for better climate risk forecasting and assessment. These measures will enable timely interventions and reduce vulnerability.
- **Promote Sustainable Resource Management**; Implement policies that encourage sustainable agricultural practices, water management, and reforestation initiatives. This will reduce resource-based conflicts and improve community resilience. Sustainable resource management is vital for long-term stability and security.
- **Enhance Access to Climate Finance**; Build institutional capacities to access international climate finance mechanisms, such as the Green Climate Fund, and develop climate projects that link adaptation with security outcomes. This access will facilitate investment in necessary resilience-building measures.

3.2. Recommendations for Regional Bodies (African Union, RECs)

- **Establish a Common African Position on Climate Change and Security;** Develop a unified position on climate security to strengthen regional cooperation and present a coordinated response at international forums such as the UNFCCC and the UN Security Council. This common position will enhance Africa's voice on the global stage.

- **Promote Regional Climate Adaptation and Resilience Projects**; Scale up initiatives like the Great Green Wall and the Congo Basin Forest Partnership to enhance regional cooperation on climate adaptation and mitigate conflict risks. These projects should address both environmental sustainability and community security.
- **Enhance Knowledge Sharing and Coordination**; Create platforms for sharing climate security knowledge and best practices across regions. Strengthen the role of Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in coordinating cross-border climate adaptation strategies. This collaboration will foster regional solidarity and collective action.
- **Develop Regional Early Warning Systems for Climate Security**; Reinvigorate regional climate security monitoring and early warning systems to anticipate and respond to transboundary climate risks, such as migration and resource conflicts. Effective systems will enhance regional stability and resilience.

3.3. Recommendations for International Organizations and Development Partners

- **Increase Climate Finance Allocation for Climate Security Initiatives**; Prioritize climate security in funding allocations, especially for regions prone to conflict and extreme climate events. This funding will support targeted interventions to enhance security.
- **Facilitate Capacity Building and Technical Assistance**; Provide technical assistance to African governments and regional bodies in conducting climate risk assessments and developing adaptation strategies that consider security implications. This support will strengthen institutional capacities and effectiveness.
- **Promote Conflict-Sensitive Climate Adaptation Projects**; Design programs that integrate conflict sensitivity and peacebuilding, particularly in regions experiencing climate-induced displacement and resource-based tensions. Conflict-sensitive approaches will reduce tensions and promote lasting peace.
- **Support International Advocacy and Policy Integration**; Advocate for the inclusion of climate security in global frameworks, such as the UNFCCC and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Facilitate global dialogue on the specific challenges faced by Africa. This advocacy will enhance international support for African initiatives.

3.4. Recommendations for Civil Society and Local Communities

- **Empower Community-Based Organizations in Climate Security Planning**; Support community-based organizations in developing and implementing local climate adaptation projects. Enhance their capacity to engage in climate security planning and decision-making processes. Community involvement is crucial for effective implementation.
- **Strengthen Community Resilience and Promote Social Cohesion**; Use local knowledge and participatory approaches to develop climate adaptation strategies that enhance community resilience. Promote initiatives that foster social cohesion and reduce resource-based tensions. Social cohesion is vital for long-term stability.
- **Raise Awareness and Advocate for Climate Security Integration**; Conduct awareness campaigns to educate communities about the links between climate change and security. Advocate for stronger integration of climate security considerations in national and regional policies. Increased awareness will drive local action.
- **Support Grassroots Peacebuilding and Climate Adaptation Initiatives**; Promote community-led peacebuilding efforts that address climate-induced

security challenges, such as conflicts between pastoralists and farmers over land and water resources. Grassroots initiatives can effectively mitigate conflicts and enhance resilience.

4.0 POSSIBLE PATHWAYS IN IMPLEMENTATION FRAMEWORKS

To operationalize these recommendations, it is crucial to establish an implementation framework that outlines roles, responsibilities, timelines, and monitoring mechanisms for each stakeholder group.

4.1 National Implementation Plans

- National governments should develop implementation plans that specify actions to integrate climate security into national development frameworks. These plans should identify priority sectors, resources required, and key performance indicators.

4.2 Regional and Continental Strategies

- Regional bodies should establish joint strategies that coordinate climate security actions across countries. The African Union should develop a continent-wide climate security strategy aligned with the Agenda 2063 goals.

4.3. International Cooperation Mechanisms

- International organizations and development partners should establish and implement cooperative mechanisms to support African countries in addressing climate security challenges. These mechanisms should facilitate resource mobilization, capacity building, and knowledge transfer.

4.4. Community Engagement and Participation

- Civil society and local communities should be engaged in every stage of the policy implementation process. Their participation ensures that climate adaptation strategies are context-specific, inclusive, and effective.

5. CONCLUSION

Addressing climate security in Africa requires a multi-stakeholder approach involving national governments, regional bodies, international organizations, and civil society. Effective climate security responses can contribute to sustainable development, enhance regional stability, and promote peace across the continent. Implementing the recommendations outlined in this policy paper will ensure that Africa is better equipped to mitigate the security risks posed by climate change.

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